

From the desk of Superintendent Michelle Jensen...

It has been 14 years since revenue caps were placed on school districts across the state, and Deerfield is continuing to feel the painful sting of these financial limitations. As we begin the 2007-08 school year, the Deerfield Board of Education has once again had to approve a budget including cuts to staffing and educational programs, in addition to using \$101,900 of fund balance, to meet the educational needs of our students.

As one of few schools in the county that receives very little monetary aid from the federal government, Deerfield has continuously had to make cuts. With little financial support from the federal government, our budget relies heavily on state and local funding. Over the past five years, we have cut teaching positions, administrative positions, instructional aide positions, delayed purchases of curriculum and textbooks, reduced classroom budgets, reduced extracurricular supply budgets, and deferred maintenance projects in order to make ends meet. Although the savings associated with these cuts has helped our budgetary needs, the loss of educational value as a result of these cuts is significant.

Unfortunately, these budget cuts have not been enough to match the widening gap between necessary district expenditures and revenue limit increases. Thanks to the financial planning of past administrators and board members, Deerfield has maintained a healthy fund balance until recently. The Board of Education has had to supplement the budget through use of fund balance the past three years taking the fund balance from 22.56% down to 16.3%. The proposed use of fund balance for 2007-08 will reduce this to 14.74%. Much like a homeowner's savings account, districts must be cautious about the ongoing use of fund balance to meet their annual budget, and they must be proactive in finding other resources to maintain programming and facilities.

During the next month, the Board will be assembling a Citizen Advisory Committee to help explore various referendum options as a means to addressing our budget deficits and curriculum and facility needs. Community members interested in being a part of this committee are encouraged to contact me at 764-5431. Deerfield has much to be proud of in their school system. We need to work together to find ways to build upon our educational excellence and continue to provide a quality education with quality curriculum and facilities for the students, staff and community. Strong schools build strong communities and a bright future for Deerfield.